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## "How We Broke the Curse of the Dance Halls"

The Successful Social Experiment Which Is Substituting Safety for the Menace of the Haunts Where Lonely Girls, Seeking Innocent Gayety and Companionship, Become the Prey of Evil

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"The Floors of These Dance Halls Rested in the Hand of Satan. In Would Come an Innocent Girl—the Claw Would Close and—There Would Be Another Lost One."

THE first of a chain of dance halls, that we hope will extend across the continent, was opened at the northeast corner of Madison avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, New York, last month.

The sign, "Cabaret Dancing," flares forth invitingly in electric lights and any young person who wants to dance may enter and may dance six times for a quarter, provided he or she dances with propriety. If not, he or she is invited to leave, and ample reason for going is provided in the person of several capable policemen. The hall is clean, large and well lighted. The young persons who fill it whirl joyously about to popular music. There is nothing to distinguish it from the other dance halls with which the city is dotted, except the world-wide difference between vice and virtue, clean and unclean living. While I and my associates of the Committee on Amusement Resources for Working Girls have been destroying agents, we have also been constructive ones. While we closed the famous Haymarket and the Tabarin and West End Casino, we have opened Dance-land at the foregoing address, and we expect to open many others; with the help of this and other cities.

The dance hall, improperly conducted, is a hotbed of infamy. Rightly conducted, it is a healthful and innocent means of recreation and a prevention of evil. Of the one hundred and fifty thousand women who live on the wages of shame in this city four-fifths began their downward course at a dance hall.

It all began with the natural and proper wish of girls to get married and be placed in life. This, it is interesting to note, is much stronger in foreigners than in American girls. The proportion is as seven to three. Foreigners have been taught to seek marriage early. American girls consider it an incident, not indispensable to getting on in life. To give this impulse a proper channel is the duty of us, who are older and wiser.

My attention to this need and my interest in supplying it were awakened twelve years ago by the cases of three girls. I was working then with the Educational Alliance, and went often to a roof playground on the East Side. One of these girls we will call Rosie. Like the others she was mad for amusement, and each time I saw her she passed her eyes flashed and her muscles tingled. She was like a wild creature athrill with the joy of life. Every day that I went to the roof she sat there on the curb watching the children play, and wishing amusement could be furnished for children of her age, sixteen. She grew more and more moody, and each time I saw her a purpose seemed forming in her mind. One day some one told me Rosie was "in trouble, along of stealing." She had been taking a few coins now and then from her mistress. They were not large sums. We soon settled the matter. But bursting into a storm of sobs on my shoulder she told me frankly why she had done it.

"I wanted to get some ribbons and things to make me look pretty, then go to dances and get m-m-married."

Minnie was an older friend of hers, a girl of twenty. She was a stenographer, and stole larger sums. Finally she got into the check-raising business, and was sent to Bedford Reformatory. Maud, who was a waitress, and sometimes relieved the cashier of the restaurant by taking her place at the till, stole a few dollars, all for the same reason. With a little more money they could make themselves prettier, could go to a dance hall and there meet Prince Charming, who could forever after gild their lives.

The picture of little Margaret is one of darker colors. She was the stenographer for my counsel, a dainty, rarely pretty little creature, a mere child in years and a babe in experience. She pined for amusement as does a little child locked in a dark room. She went with another girl to a dance hall. There she met a youth who made love of his fashion to her. She became infatuated in a half childish, half womanish way with him. Within a year Margaret was dead. At sixteen she died, a mother. She and the nameless child are buried in Potter's Field.

A girl, Gretchen, who worked in my household, was a victim of the dance hall, and in a not unusual way. Gretchen had the foreign thrift, and in the few years that she had worked in this country she

had saved five hundred dollars. Gretchen, like most girls, wanted to marry. To marry she must meet young men, and to meet young men she must go to dance halls. She began going out with another girl to these places. The horrible aftermath of had dance halls followed. In a week she had married him, had gone to Rochester with him for a honeymoon, and was deserted at the station. She never saw him again, nor her bankbook, which was the reason for the marriage.

A few of the girls have contrived to save a few hundred dollars. One I know had saved a thousand. This the men they meet at the dance hall discovered and marrying them is the best way to get access to the bank account. They go with their brides to the banks, have their names written in the books, draw out the money and disappear. The only dance hall where I have ever known have had the possession of the bank books as their motive, so far as the bridegroom was concerned.

While large, dark, empty rooms surround some of these dance halls, and private rooms are to be obtained at others, often the dance hall is merely a place of meeting, which leads to further acquaintance at other resorts, especially at some of the seashore resorts. Two girls, Alla, a Russian, who had been in this country but two years, and a younger girl of her acquaintance, met at a dance hall two young men,

who invited them to go with them to Coney Island next day. The girls accompanied them, and they heard the old excuse: "It is so late. Why go home to-night?" The case coming under my attention I sent for one of the young men, and we soon convinced him he was amenable to the law unless he married her. This being made clear to him he said he was willing to marry her. It was Alla who surprised us by saying: "He is a miserable dog. He deceived me. I will not marry him!"

Her lesson was a sufficient one. Alla shuns the dance halls now, and I am not sure that she will ever come to the model one. She has become a man hater. But two girls, Bertha and Jennie, had no such chance to rehabilitate themselves. Meeting at a dance hall two lads who lured them to the seashore resort the girls never tried, or trying, they failed to re-establish themselves on firm ground. Bertha went recently to Blackwells Island. Jennie I saw walking the dark side of Sixth avenue one night. Her face was painted and her hair dyed. Her eyes had grown bold, as do those of women who, having been hunted, turn hunters of men.

A typical case, one representing the amusement hunger that leads to such pitfalls was that which I relate to those whose help I need in the establishment of model dance halls. It has helped to bring about the legislation which placed dance halls under the control and surveillance of the License Bureau.



The Turkey Trot, as Shown Here, is Barred from the New Dance Hall Movement. The Touching of Cheeks an Eccentricity of Movement Are Contributing Factors in the Dangers of the Old Dance Hall.

When Frieda came to this country she was sixteen, pretty, full of fun and had a wholesome curiosity about America. She came alone. An uncle, who had three daughters of his own, gave her a home. These girls had been in America since they were babies. They were typical New York working girls. They welcomed the "greenhorn," and put her in the kitchen while they went out to work.

The New York cousins had grown up in the free atmosphere of the republic, with men friends, "sociables" and all the rest of the things that mean a "good time" for the American girl. They were not inclined to introduce the "greenies" into their set. She

had not yet acquired style, and she spoke no intelligible English. After Frieda finished her day's work in the tenement, making things smooth and comfortable for the other girls, she was expected to spend the evening in the kitchen by herself, listening to the laughter, song and talk that floated in from the parlor, where the other girls were having a good time. She soon indicated that she would like to take part in it, but, like Cinderella's sisters, the cousins would have none of it.

When Frieda went out to do errands she noticed that there were streets with places other than stores. They were brightly lighted halls, from whose open windows strains of music floated, and across which horns floated in rhythmic motion. One evening she drifted in. She found that she did not need to know English to be welcome. At once she found the things she missed at home—life, joy, laughter and young people.

She was pretty, and as girls are always in demand at dances she was soon being shown the dance by a youth whose evident business it was to give her some return for the twenty-five cents she paid for a lesson. Quickly she learned the value of knowing how to dance, and still more quickly did her popularity grow with the boys who came to the hall. From that hall

she learned to go to others, where she was taught that to be really popular it was essential to learn to drink "stylish drinks," and that dancing without drinking was "slow." Then one night when her head was whirling from excitement and dazed with drink she fell. She never turned again from the path that began in the kitchen of the tenement, where she sat longing for the birthright of her youth. She followed it through the maze of wretched slavery to men, and walked to its end five years later in a reformatory to which she had been committed, and where her nameless baby was born.

It is to prevent such fates as Frieda's that the model dance halls are opened. There every girl can enjoy herself as much as she likes in decency. Here is a dancing master to censor the dances, and the manager will help him. Every one is welcome who seems respectable, and there will be plenty of young men of good character to see that there are no wall flowers. Women connected with our committee will be there ostensibly to dance and enjoy themselves with the rest, but really to see that the girls are protected from undesirable acquaintances. Vigilance and tact will prevent the beginning of acquaintances that lead to such fates as that of poor Frieda's story. The girls are protected without knowing it. They have chaperons without being appalled by the new strange name.

We will not bar the bunny hug nor turkey trot. No dance that I recall is in itself indecent. It is the way it is danced that makes it improper. Our claim is that if the right position is maintained the dances have no vulgarity. The dancers should stand at a respectful distance from each other. A girl's hands should be upon a young man's arms. Her arms should not be about his neck, nor should her cheek be pressed against his.

We have arranged for classes in which lessons in dancing are given at twenty cents apiece. The hall will be open on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, we reserving the right to exclude any one we consider undesirable.

We expect to fulfill our object, which is to make clean the amusement atmosphere in New York. What happens on the street we cannot help, but we mean to provide that any girl or woman who goes to a hall for innocent amusement shall have it, and that she will be as safe as though dancing in her own home.



Such Degrading Dances as This—the Apache Dance—Soon Filter from the Stage to the Dance Halls and Form One of Its Greatest Dangers. They Are Forbidden in the Safe Dance Halls of the New Movement.

### Why Winter Creates New Bad Tempers and Lawsuits

"If you want to insult somebody, and hear no more about it, wait till Summer comes. Winter, with its colds and its other painful gifts of grip, influenza, bronchitis and rheumatism, is the season of bad tempers and law suits."

This is the advice of an observing London lawyer—the present Winter is very trying in London. The lawyer goes on to say:

"In the Winter people go to law about fancied insults, and are always taking offense when none is intended.

"Little things annoy people and drive them to law in the Winter, which would be thought very little of in the Summer. Litigation and court cases of every description are certainly far more plentiful in Winter than in Summer. I should estimate that the business of the County Courts increases by about 30 per cent, and that of the law and police courts by 70 or 80 per cent. What is the reason? The weather! It is very simple.

"In the Summer if your acquaintances tread on any of your pet corners you can go off in a rage and in ten minutes you have probably worked off the greater part of the trouble through your skin.

"In Summer your skin acts more easily than in

Winter because of the temperature—at any rate in a normal Summer. Then, again, you get more exercise, or what is the same thing, an equivalent amount of exercise produces a greater result.

"Your liver acts more easily—and you don't feel beaten down and depressed as you do in dark, cold, dismal weather.

"An official of the Westminster County Court told me that the origin of the trouble in very many cases dealt with there during the Winter could be attributed to the weather, and cited the following typical instance of a complaint made to him:

"A widow—a cook-housekeeper, living out, asked for the recovery of wages, following on wrongful dismissal.

"Only a week ago, she declared, her mistress had given her a raise of 50 cents per week to help her pay her rent. On Monday morning she was suddenly dismissed without notice, after serving breakfast two minutes late.

"No reason was given her for the dismissal, but she said that her employer was irritable at the time, because of the bad weather."

"There can be no doubt that Winter weather accounts in a very large measure for the troubles of the season.